

The Quest of the Holy Grail



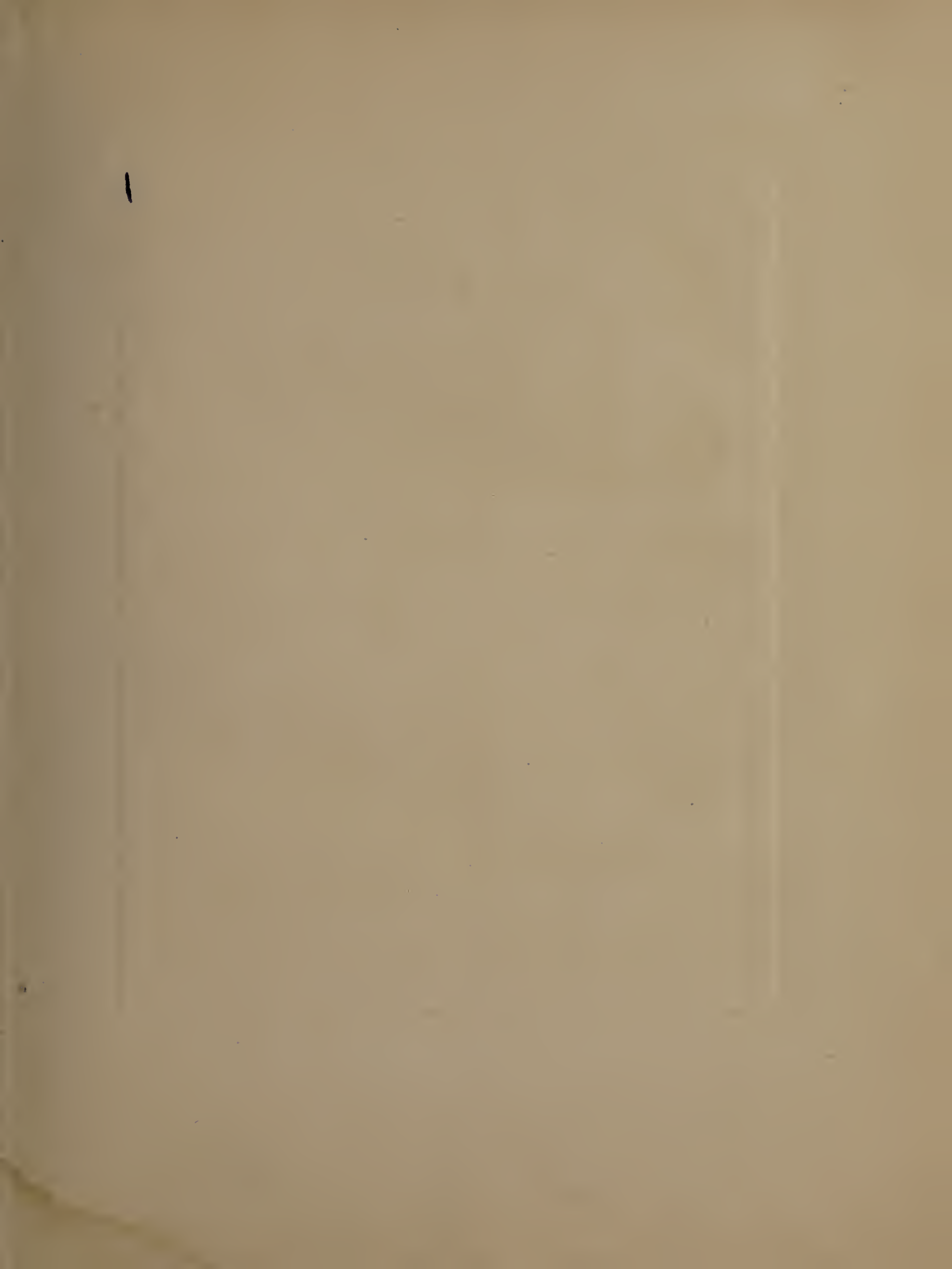


To May from
Addie F. Rood 1920.

To Kathy Jordan from Marion
December 1953

... ..
... ..

The Quest of the Holy Grail





The Quest of the Holy Grail

AN INTERPRETATION AND A PARAPHRASE
OF THE HOLY LEGENDS, BY FERRIS
GREENSLET, PH.D., WITH ILLUS-
TRATIONS FROM THE FRIEZE
DECORATION IN THE BOS-
TON PUBLIC LIBRARY
BY EDWIN AUSTIN
ABBEE, R.A.



BOSTON
CURTIS & CAMERON
MCMII

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

The first five paintings of the *Grail* frieze, reproduced in the following pages,—*The Vision of the Grail*, *The Oath of Knighthood*, *The Round Table of King Arthur*, *The Departure*, and *The Castle of the Grail*,—copyright 1895 by Edwin A. Abbey; the others copyright 1901 by Edwin A. Abbey. The Copley Prints of the first five, from which the reproductions in this book are made, copyright 1897 by Curtis & Cameron; the others copyright 1902 by Curtis & Cameron. This book copyright 1902 by Curtis & Cameron.

All rights reserved.

Book Copyright transferred, 1902, to Edwin A. Abbey.

Entered at Stationers' Hall.

Contents

Introduction :

	PAGE
I The Grail as Symbol	19
II The Romances of the Sangraal	25
III The Depiction of the Grail	34

Galahad's Quest : 41

I The Birth of Galahad	43
II The Vow of Knighthood	45
III The Siege Perilous	47
IV The Departure	50
V The Castle of the Grail	53
VI The Loathly Damsel	56
VII The Castle of the Maidens: The Fight . . .	58
VIII The Castle of the Maidens: The Key . . .	61
IX The Castle of the Maidens	62
X Blanchefleur	65
XI Amfortas	68
XII Galahad the Deliverer	71
XIII Solomon's Ship	72
XIV Sarras	75
XV The Holy Grail	77

Illustrations

Galahad the Deliverer	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Study for Galahad in The Siege Perilous .	<i>Facing page 20</i>
Study for The Siege Perilous	22
Study for The Siege Perilous	24
Study for The Siege Perilous	26
Study for The Siege Perilous	28
Study	30
Study for The Siege Perilous	32
Study for The Death of Amfortas	34
Study for Galahad the Deliverer	36
Study for The Vow of Knighthood	42
The Vision of the Grail	44
The Vow of Knighthood	46
The Siege Perilous	48
The Departure	50
The Castle of the Grail	54
The Loathly Damsel	56
The Seven Sins	58
The Key to the Castle	60
The Castle of the Maidens	62
Blanchefleur	66
The Death of Amfortas	68
Study for Galahad the Deliverer	70
Solomon's Ship	72
The Golden Tree	76
Sarras	<i>On page 78</i>

Author's Note

In the Paraphrase of the Legends the episodes of the Grail story chosen by Mr. Abbey for his paintings are used as the framework of a consecutive narrative. The material is then translated or paraphrased from whichever of the sources furnishes it in the simplest form and in the closest relation to the artist's design. Whenever possible, I have, as the reader will discover, followed Malory's diction, with only such slight alterations as were needed to preserve the integrity of the story in the pictures.

F. G.

Introduction

The Quest of the Holy Grail

I

The Grail as Symbol



THE wine-cup, from the earliest time of which record is preserved for us, has been taken as a mystic symbol and a sign. Far back in the misty dawn of Oriental legend we hear of the cup, not merely as an emblem of good-fellowship, but as possessing prodigious properties for magic and marvels. In Hellenic tradition the chalice is sacred to the mystical ministrations of Dionysus, not the riotous Bacchus of later art, but a dreamy yet vigorous deity of the vine, typical of all the rich and various life of growing nature. In the ever-flowing vales of Arcady it was most often a cup, curiously carved, for which the Dorian shepherds contended in amœbean verse, and breathed quaintly-modulated melodies through the oaten pipe. In the North, where the heady brew of malt and barley played as best it might the part of the subtle spirit of the grape, the drinking-cup was none the less an object of imaginative respect. Fenian stories tell of a medicinal cup, whereby fierce warriors healed of all their hurts may fight delightfully forever; and the Teutonic races em-

The Quest of the Holy Grail

ployed a cup in their sacred ritual of *Brüderschaft*, whence has come down to us the symbol of the loving-cup.

When Christianity came into the Western World all this was changed, sublimated, and, so to say, siderealized. The fervid monkish imagination of the middle ages wound itself like a serpent intricately into the heart of the ancient legends, turning them to its own ends and uses. The wine-cup fared with the rest. It ceased to be the assigned symbol of the urbane pleasures of men, or of their pastoral diversion; it was no longer typical of the opulent vitality of nature, or of the generous devotion of friendship. Then arose the supreme mediæval mythos of the Sangraal, that vanished vase of God, in which the genial wine, extract of Southern suns and the smiles of grape-gatherers, was dispossessed by the blood of Christ. So the wine-cup, now the Holy Grail, became the true Golden Branch, beaconing to high endeavor across the dusky world.

We shall find the objective nucleus of the legends considered retrospectively sufficiently clear. The Holy Grail, or the Sangraal, is the *Sanc-graal*, ultimately derived from the Low Latin term *gradalis*, signifying a mixing-cup or chalice.* The early history of this portentous vessel is somewhat

* The derivation *Sang-real*, royal blood, or real blood, is specious, but purely whimsical, with no philological authority.



The Grail as Symbol

obscure. Like many wonder-working relics of the middle ages, other than the bones of Saints, it seems to have been given to Solomon by the Queen of Sheba; but this is not certain. Coming to the date of the crucifixion of our Lord the legend grows clearer and, for a time, more consistent. The Grail is fabled to have been the wine-cup used at the Last Supper, with which, later on Calvary, one of the Sanhedrim, Joseph of Arimathea, caught the blood flowing from the wounded side and pierced hands and feet of Christ. Being thereafter thrown into prison, and languishing there forty-two years, without food, this Joseph is miraculously kept alive by the heavenly sustenance proceeding from the Grail. For it will be seen that by its use at the Last Supper, and by the part it played at the Crucifixion, the Grail became indissolubly linked to the eucharistic mystery of the mass.

Indeed in later times many of those who were granted the sweet vision of the Grail were fabled to have seen by its light the fiery face as of a child that came and smote itself into the sacramental bread.

The life of Joseph of Arimathea having been thus wondrously preserved, he is said to have escaped from his prison, and, still bearing the Holy Grail, to have taken his way as the first evangel to

The Quest of the Holy Grail

Britain, and to have deposited the Grail at Glastonbury; but it was not long before the wonder-working cup disappears from such too definite localities to appear again only in the purple regions of romance.*

The later adventures of the Grail will become apparent as we trace the mutations of the story in the pages of the romancers, and fare with Galahad on his quest. But before either can be done one must try to realize something of the hold which such an object as the Grail had in the middle ages upon all men's imagination.

There is in the human mind, however much it be cultivated, an objectifying or animistic instinct, which tends to endow certain objects, first with spiritual associations, then with spiritual significance, then with spiritual power. It is something quite other than the process of occultism and allegory, in which a definite object is arbitrarily taken as a symbol of some purely intellectual idea or spiritual truth. The process seen in the growth of the Grail story has operated in a wholly different direction. Here there is as a nucleus a definite association between the visionary object and the event that it commemorates.

When once this has been sharply conceived by the monkish mind it passes out of the monas-

*The student of the legend need not take very seriously the claim that the cracked platter of green glass now piously preserved at Genoa is the veritable Sangraal.



The Grail as Symbol

teries. It comes then into the ken of the people, a people half maddened by the epidemic fervors of the Crusades, their imagination stimulated by the marvellous tales the Crusaders brought back from the Orient, their eyes open to phantasmagoria and vision, their ears attuned to the horns of Elf-Land and the barking of Cain's dog from the moon.

But it is not just to class the Grail story with other mediæval Christian superstitions. It took its rise from the same set of causes as many of them, and it was furthered by similar agencies, but it was the noblest superstition of them all. It was the most pervasive, and it was informed by the purest ideality. More than we can now realize, the middle ages, with all their superstitions, were ages of doubt, fervently desirous of certainty. The Grail was for these ages the typical externalization of God's will. The knightly quest of the Grail was the chivalric equivalent of the theologic pursuit of ultimate truth. The mere dream of the Grail, or its veiled appearance, was believed to be regeneration, and its actual attainment salvation, euthanasia, and the beatific vision. The quest of the Grail is typical of nothing less than the quest of ideal beauty and truth,—perfection in short,—which every age has adventured, each in its own

The Quest of the Holy Grail

spirit. Socrates and Brutus, Galahad and Faustus, Alastor, Sordello, and a multitude of others are all, in this sense, fellow-knights of the quest.



II

The Romances of the Sangraal



THE Grail legend, as it appears in literature, bears within itself the three central imaginative forces of mediæval romance. In its development Celtic fancy, Christian symbolism, and knightly ideals of chivalry mingle and blend. Better, perhaps, than any other of the legends which received literary treatment, it exhibits in its essential theme the capacity of the middle ages for romantic fervors and renunciations, while in its wealth of extraneous incident and grotesquerie it illustrates their wayward, ebullient vitality. But these very traits, by virtue of which it is so truly representative, render the task of tracing its actual growth almost the despair of the literary historian. The learned have never come to any full agreement concerning the order and interrelations of the earlier Grail romances; and, as we shall see, even the tentative accommodation that had been established seems recently to have been perturbed by the entrance into the lists of the champion of a new theory. Yet there is a consensus of competent opinion which places the Grail books in some such perspective as this which follows.

The Quest of the Holy Grail

As an oral tradition *a* Grail that is a wonder-working cup, may have appeared among Celtic peoples very early in the Christian era; at what particular point *the* Grail first emerged in letters no man can affirm. It is a pleasant belief, and deserving of some credence, that a Welsh hermit first set down the high history of Joseph of Arimathea and the Holy Grail, in the eighth century after our Lord's death, but if this be so his work is lost to us, and his name hid in the dark backward of time. In succeeding centuries monks and priests may have used the legend to enforce to the laity ethical and extra-theologic teaching, just as for a similar purpose they drew so largely from apocryphal gospels, but this is uncertain. At the very end of the twelfth century the legend emerges more clearly in the work of three men, all Norman-French writers, but working in almost complete independence of each other, Chrestien de Troyes, Robert de Borron and Walter Mapes. The truth of the matter probably is that the story of the Grail existed throughout all Christendom in a fluid, unprecipitated form. It was dear to the general heart of man, and somewhat in men's mouths; as soon, therefore, as romance writing became in fashion, as it did in the droop of the twelfth century, the Grail story, linked as it was to be with the great cycle of King Arthur, was



The Romances of the Sangraal

sure to appeal powerfully to the imagination of many writers.

The first of the great Grail romances was the huge *Conte du Graal*, begun by Chrestien de Troyes and afterward continued to the enormous bulk of sixty thousand lines by three men otherwise little known to fame, Gautier de Douzens, Manessier, and Gerbert de Montreuil. This first efflorescence was distinguished from the romances which succeeded by certain clearly marked traits. Chrestien and his continuators cared little for the symbolism of the legends. They knew of the Grail as the sacred vessel of God, they likewise exhibited something of that vaguely pervasive, so-called Celtic mysticism, which lurks in the objects of sense, smiling damsels or tremulous water, yet nevertheless, with these writers one feels despite the *longueurs* that the story is the thing. The *Conte du Graal* is an anthology of adventurous story with little organic unity and less spiritual meaning. For this very reason, it is to our purpose to note, the work of Chrestien and his fellows is often more suggestive to a painter, more *picturesque*.

Some time during the slow composition of the *Conte du Graal* Robert de Borron wrote a trilogy of poems dealing with the story of the Grail. Of these two are preserved, in whole or in part,

The Quest of the Holy Grail

Joseph of Arimathea and Merlin, while the third, Perceval, is lost. Thus De Borron's work as it now stands treats only of the early history of the Grail, and ends where the final quest by Perceval (or Galahad, for our purpose the names have become almost convertible) begins. But from the Joseph of Arimathea it is clear that the religious import of the Holy Grail was much in De Borron's mind.

Walter Mapes's connection with the cycle has been discredited by sceptical scholarship, but during the time of the continuation of the *Conte du Graal* there appeared a prose romance the *Queste del Saint Graal*, which is assigned to him on good manuscript authority. Unfortunately the case is complicated by the existence of another prose romance, the so-called *Grand Saint Graal*, the authorship of which has likewise been referred to the amiable archdeacon of Oxford. So long as no positive proof is forthcoming that Mapes did not write either of these, many will like to believe that he did write one of them. For we know enough of Walter Mapes to know that he was an exceedingly attractive type of the mediæval scholar, courtier, and man of letters, and perhaps the only man of his century conspicuously capable of handling for the first time in a mystical temper such a theme as the quest of the Holy Grail.



The Romances of the Sangraal

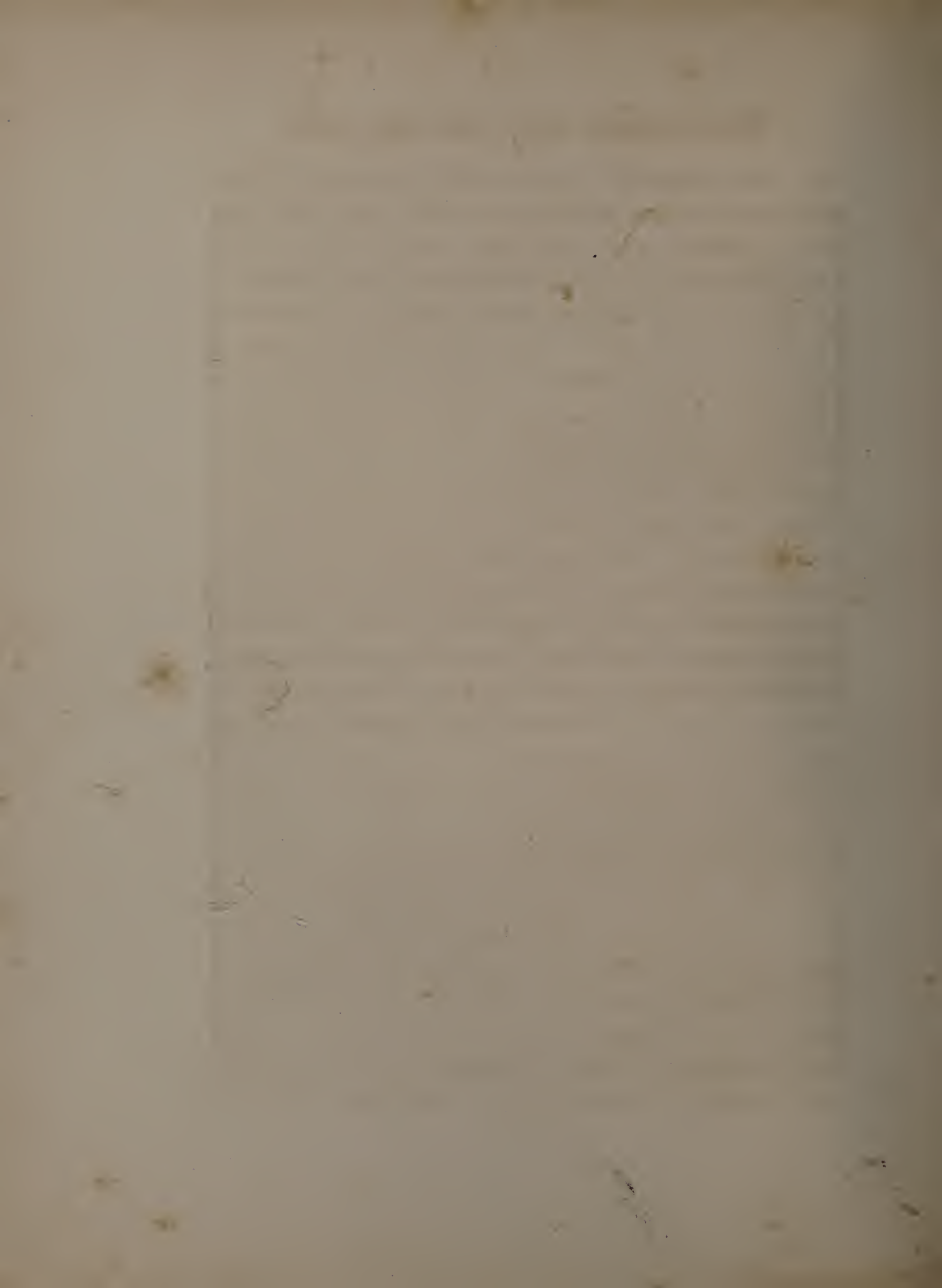
From this time forth the legend exhibits a constantly increasing inwardness and mysticity. In the romance known as *Perceval le Gallois*, held by some to be a late cento of passages redacted from the other versions, and by its accomplished translator Dr. Evans to be the earliest and most definite form of the story, the adventures of the Grail quest are not only typical and symbolic, but they are, alas! allegorized. For in this version the Fisher King Amfortas, who is bound in a living death until he shall be set free by the maiden knight of the quest, is, at least in the opinion of Dr. Evans, all but surely the Pope in his Babylonish captivity at Avignon. By the same token we are to believe that the delivering knight "chaste and virgin of his body, and hardy of heart and puissant," is none other than Dante's amorous wooer of the Christian faith, the holy athlete, kindly to his own but harsh to his enemies, that is, Saint Dominic. As for Yglais, his mother, who should she be but *église*, the most holy church. In short, this embodiment of the legend is the apotheosis of ecclesiastical chivalry. Yet the action of the quest passes no less briskly, and the episodes are as vivid and moving as in the other versions. For some this possible allegorical perversion will mar the charm of the romantic story, but to the considerate

The Quest of the Holy Grail

reader it should bring a new interest, showing how wide an area a traditional legend may drain, or, to change the figure, how it may absorb into itself all the spiritual movements of a complex age.

Viewed in the clear air of the uplands of literature, the greatest of the old Grail romances was the Parzival of Wolfram von Eschenbach. Wolfram manifestly owes much to Chrestien, but it is a debt he would wish to disavow. Chrestien, he says, was too discursive, too little impressed by the mystic profundity of his subject, too fond of introducing damsels for their own sake. Wolfram wishes one to believe that his chief source is a poem by Kiot, a poet of Provence, who, he says, drew in turn from Flegetanis a heathen writer of Toledo. If there were such writers no manuscript of theirs and no word of record of their lives has come down to us. Yet it is more than probable that there was a Kiot or Guyot, who wrote a poem in French turning the Grail story to the honor of the house of Anjou and that he was indeed Wolfram's authority. Wolfram, like all the Minnesingers, was closely akin to the Provençal troubadours, and there is in all his work a touch of their southern ardor and more courtly manner. But the great characteristic quality of Wolfram's poem is its human-





The Romances of the Sangraal

ity. His Parzival is as ideally devoted to the high quest as any of his prototypes, but he is less of the ascetic and more the man of the world; he grows wise by painful and not always admirable experience; he knows the taste of Dead-Sea fruit; and he knows more, too, of the common joys and sorrows of life. Because of this he is, perhaps, a more moving and dramatic figure; certainly he is a protagonist closer to our modern sympathies. But it is precisely because of these things that the character of Parzival loses in typical value. Galahad the bright boy knight unswervingly bent to the quest, the antitype of Tannhäuser in the hollow hill, is the true and eternal type of the uncompromising idealist.

For most English readers given to wandering in realms of gold, the favorite and familiar form of the history of the Sangraal is that found in five books, the thirteenth to the seventeenth inclusive, of Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*. In preparing his copy for Caxton's press, Malory was not always careful to attain originality or even consistency. Writing some two centuries and a half after Mapes he is only the redactor of old romances, and, in the telling of the Grail story, not having the advantage of our learned illumination, he seems bothered in discriminating the tangled threads of it. But his work is a

The Quest of the Holy Grail

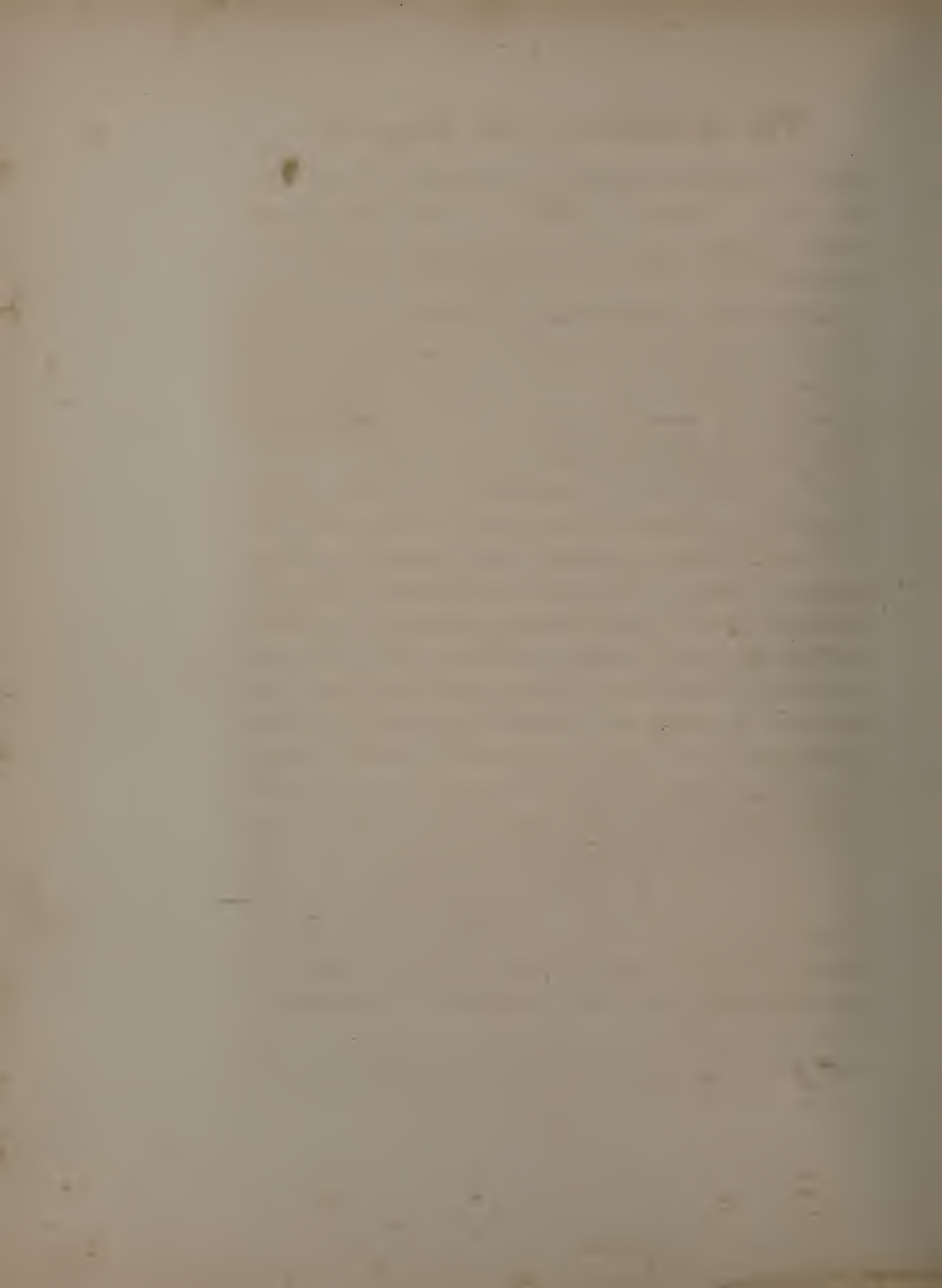
notable instance of the aseptic property of style. His marvellous diction, precise in its propriety, yet richly freighted with romantic meanings, and the sinuous, rhythmical dance of his periods, have conspired to eternalize his less perfect form of the legend of the Grail.

The Renaissance, with its bustle of objective life and its sunny humanism, obscured for a time the vision of the Grail. Calderon's protagonists may have known it in their dreams and the Red Cross Knight may have carried the thought of it in his heart as he was pricking on the plain; yet for three centuries the pure Grail motive was practically unknown in letters. But in the nineteenth century when such varied mediæval interests came to new birth, many poets found themselves free-born citizens of Camelot which

"lieth sublime,
Out of space, out of time,"

and were beckoned to follow the gleam of the Grail. Tennyson's Idyll is, of course, the best known. Tennyson wrought his will on the legends, through the asceticism, mysticism and knightly courtesy of the old story-tellers infusing his own aspirations and the ideals of his own time. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding that Percivale is really hero of the Grail Idyll, Ten-





The Romances of the Sangraal

nyson's Galahad must always remain for the rank and file of English readers the one memorable knight of the quest. Yet had he not died ere his prime the poet of Taliesin might have been more at ease in that literary Siege Perilous.

There is, finally, Wagner's Parsifal, the lyric drama in which one of the most elevated and powerful of modern minds has endeavored to make the Grail story the vehicle of the contradictory passions and aspirations of the world. Wagner in telling the outlines of the story has followed Wolfram, though with unsparing acceleration. But he has both subtilized it and humanized it, so to afford scope for the ineffable pity of the Grail music. Kundry, for example, who was in Wolfram a damsel of an ordinary sort, becomes in Wagner a tragic figure of profound significance; a woman endowed with unholy beauty and forced against her will to lead good knights astray, but with the proviso that if one that she truly loves shall resist her, then may she be saved. Last of all, it is in Parsifal that the Galahad type, always something of the Avatar, attains its logical conclusion and apotheosis; for here Parsifal is all but identified imaginatively with the Christ.

III

The Depiction of the Grail



IN view of the wide-spread diffusion and age-long intensification of the legends of the Holy Grail, it is, perhaps, strange that Mr. Abbey's was the first attempt to afford them consecutive pictorial illustration. Yet so it is; and before passing to the quest one must consider the intricate problem that confronted the artist.

We have seen how successive "makers" found this dim, impalpable legend, lying on the border land of sublunary things, how they made it their own, put blood into it, gave it flesh and bones, and set it forth in pleasant speech, adorned with bright fancies. And those who have read the poems and romances know the strange effect of them, how the vital blending of the symbol with the idea it symbolizes holds the eye to the very sky-line of speculation, where Heaven and Earth meet and are interfused. Well, for us the designs in this book are the newest stage in this cumulative process of visualization, and the latest precipitation of cloudy tradition.

The architectural demands upon the pictures considered as mural decorations, and the exigen-



The Depiction of the Grail

cies of space, rendered inevitable certain selections, resolutions, and simplifications. Chief and most significant of these is the attribution to Galahad of situations and adventures which in the romances belong to others, Launcelot, Gawain, Percival, or Bors. As the Grail bore within itself many complex, sometimes clashing aspirations, so the painter in his depiction of Galahad has made him the single, representative champion of all the knights of the quest. A similar resolution and compression is exhibited in the suggestions of his character and temperament. He is not quite such a visionary ascetic as the Galahad of Malory and Tennyson is sometimes felt to be. Something of the humanity of Wolfram's Parzival moulds the lineaments of his face and appears outwardly in his deed. Nevertheless he is always the pure and perfect virgin knight, clad not in silver armor "like a moonlit pillar in the night," but always in red, the color emblematic of heavenly purity. So Dante's Beatrice was in red, the hue of Christ's atoning blood, and of the purifying flame.

In short, the painter's method has been admirably eclectic. He has shirked no arduous research, but in using his material he has, like Tennyson, been guided rather by the artist's instinct than by the professional scholar's superstitious re-

The Quest of the Holy Grail

spect for his sources. Like any worker in higher departments of art he may say with Molière, "*Je reprends mon bien partout où je le trouve.*"

Now when anyone takes a theme which has been treated by literature, the art of words, and expresses it in the medium of line and color, he subjects himself to a limitation which carries certain corresponding and compensating advantages. Even a story-telling sequence of designs cannot represent progressive action. The youth beneath the trees can never leave his song, nor can the bold lover ever kiss, though winning near the goal. It is the business of painting to "depict arrested motion," as the critical phrase goes, but it may choose the pregnant instant that shall inevitably make you look before and after. This is how painting gets its narrative power which can make of a portrait a biography. It was thus, to take a supreme instance, that Leonardo, by the help of his viols and flutes, caught the look in the eyes and on the lips of Lady Lisa, in which an interpreter has read the life-story of the World. But it will not do to dwell too long or intimately on the narrative properties of painting. At root the pleasure we receive from it should be as direct and vivid as that given by a phrase of music,—the simple, sensuous, and passionate delight of form and color.

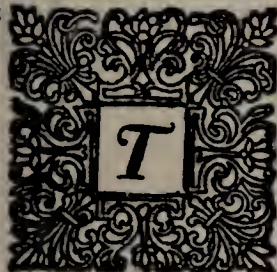


The Depiction of the Grail

This is what Mr. Abbey has done with the floating star-stuff in the legends and romances of the Quest of the Holy Grail. He has selected ideal instants of typical adventures, single "time-blocks," so to say, in the old tumultuous and contradictory stories; he has imagined these clearly and completely; so he has endeavored to depict the quintessence of the Grail story to be a perennial delight to the eye as to the mind.

Galabad's Quest

Galahad's Quest

 *THE High Book of the Holy Grail be-
ginneth in the name of the Father and
of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.
These three persons are one substance,
which is God, and of God moveth the
High Story of the Grail. And all they that hear
it ought to understand it, and to forget all the wick-
edness that they have in their hearts. For right
profitable shall it be to all them that shall hear it of
the heart."*

So begins the history of the most holy vessel that is called the Grail, wherein learned clerks have set in remembrance the pain and travail suffered by worthy knights and worshipful men, questing the Grail. For they tell us that the holy vessel being brought to Glastonbury by Joseph of Arimathea, that good soldier of Pilate, afterwards of Christ, it abode there many years, working divers miracles and wonders; for by it many were fed in body and in spirit, and some were healed of sore and grievous hurts. But at last, the guardian spirits of the Grail took it from Glastonbury and gave it into the charge of knightly guardians in a castle upon a hill, thereafter to be known as

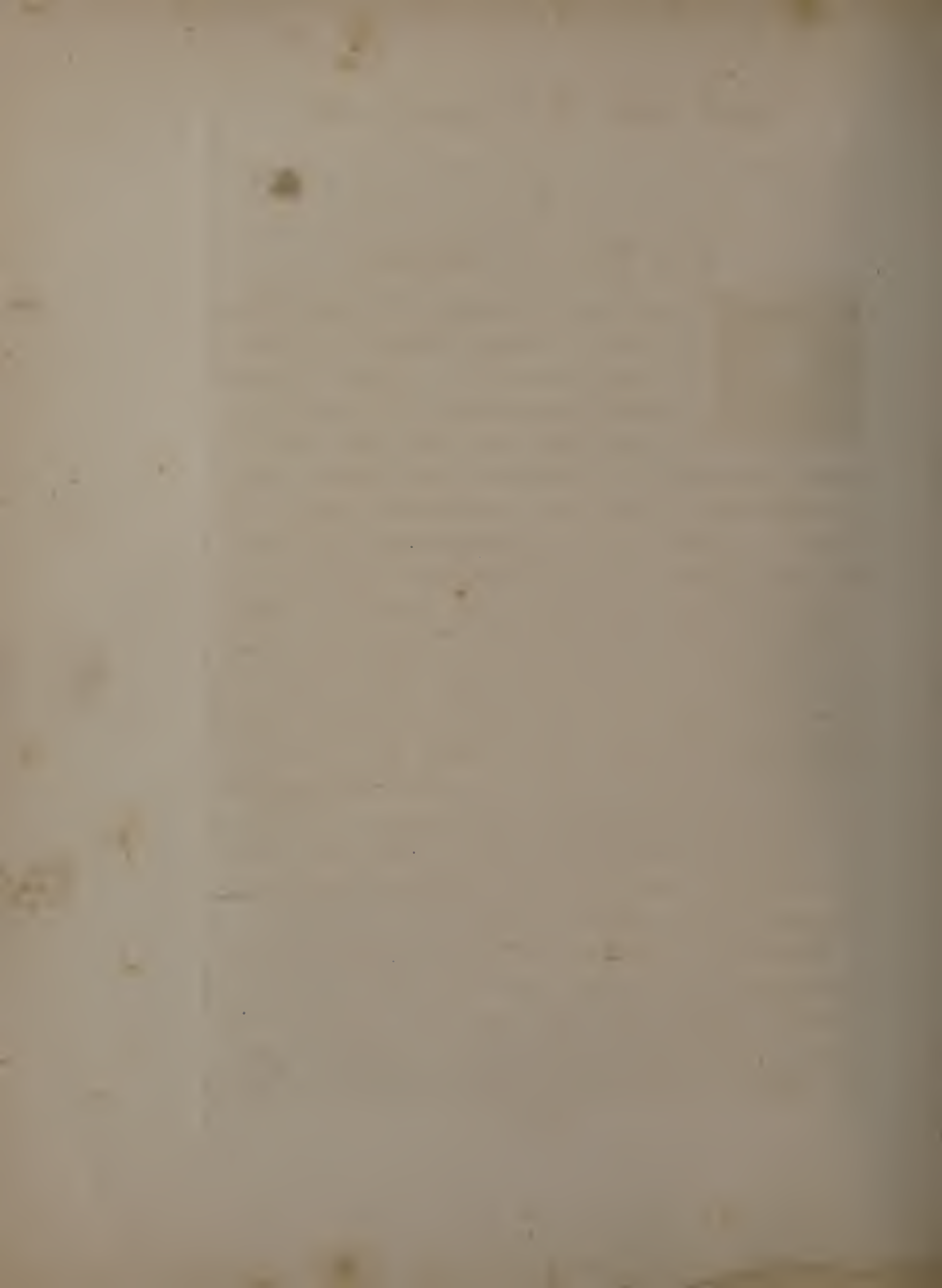
The Quest of the Holy Grail

the Castle of the Grail. And one charge the heavenly watchers of the Grail gave to its earthly wardens, which was that they be always chaste and virgin in body as in thought, unswerving in the right, so to be a lesson and light to ruder men who sang too lustily,

*A carnis illectamentis,
Domine, libera nos,*

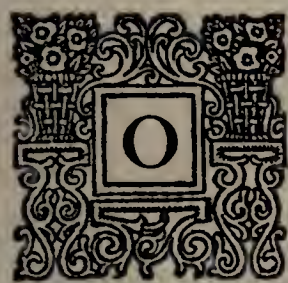
yet walked not in the way of virtue. Then it came to pass that after many generations the chief of the keepers of the Grail was Amfortas, the Fisher King, a brave warrior and in most things a just king, of the lineal race of Arima-thean Joseph. But he,—wrought upon by dark enchantments, departed from the way of the guardians of the Grail, and took up arms in the cause of unlawful love. For this the holy vessel was rapt away from the sight of its keepers and hereafter their eyes were holden that they might not see it, though it appeared often among them; and Amfortas with all his court, was doomed to languish forever in a living death until the perfect knight should come, with reverent and compassionate question to set them free to the real and long-desired death. And that Christian fate from which are the issues of life, had decreed that this should be he who should achieve the supreme quest of the Holy Grail.





I

The Birth of Galahad



ON an Easter Sunday in the days when Arthur was king of Britain a wonderful child was born. Many learned makers have written of his parentage but no two of them are of one mind. Some say Launcelot was his father, being brought by enchantment to Elaine, others say that the child's sire was Joseph, others still that he was Alain le Gros. However that be, two things are sure: on his mother's side the child was of the race of Joseph of Arimathea; and his conception was miraculous. One calls his mother Helyab, another Herzeleide, which signifies sorrow of heart; one makes her a widow, another a wedded virgin, for many have thought that she was immaculate as the mother of Merlin, or Mary the mother of Christ. The child thus marvellously come into the world was christened Galahad, which signifies purity.

While the child was still very young he was committed, as became one who was to be a maiden knight, into the care of a company of nuns. There among the nuns a portent came. For once as a sweet-eyed sister was pacing to and

The Quest of the Holy Grail

fro with the young child in her arms, there was a sudden brightness and a soft, clear light. Then appeared there before the child and her that bore him an angel bearing in her hands the Grail that radiantly gleamed and shone through its covering veil of red samite, and with that benignant angel came hovering a white dove, and swinging from the beak of the dove was a golden censer. Then she that carried the child Galahad knelt in adoration, turning away her face from the brightness of the light, yet held she up the child toward it. And Galahad stretched out his small arms toward the veiled gleaming of the Grail, and fain would reach it. But as yet that might not be. Only there proceeded from the sacred vessel mystical sustenance so that the child grew and throve greatly thereby. And still he abode with the holy nuns, being reared with all pious instruction and admonition.

The Vision of the Grail



II

The Vow of Knighthood



NOW when Galahad had become a stalwart youth, built in the mystic measure of the cross, strong of arm and straight of body, it was right that he should tarry cloistered here no longer, but that he should go out into the wide world to acquit himself of knightly deeds. So he made ready to depart, but ere he went he performed the ordeal whereby good knights are made. All night he watched in the dark and silent chapel pondering many things. Then in the dawn when his vigil was ended the nuns fetched to him two of the best and bravest knights in all this world, Sir Launcelot and Sir Bors from the Round Table of Arthur the King. Then stood the holy nuns before the altar, and their tapers faintly burning, illumined the saintly faces on the chapel wall and the scroll, mystic symbol of eternity, above. And Sir Bors and Sir Launcelot knelt behind Galahad and buckled upon his heels the golden spurs of knighthood, while he, kneeling upon a higher step of the altar, took the high vow of chivalry; to speak the truth and maintain the right; to protect the poor, the distressed, and all women;

The Quest of the Holy Grail

to practice courtesy and kindness with all; to despise the allurements of ease and safety; and to maintain honor and the cause of God in every perilous adventure.

Then fared Sir Galahad forth into the world. But as yet he had seen little of the land without the convent walls, and nothing at all knew he of the life of men. So it came to pass that he fell into the hands of the wise and subtle Gurnemanz. As from the holy nuns he had learned higher knowledge, so by him he was taught human wisdom and the lore of this world.

The Vow of Knighthood



III

The Siege Perilous



OW the tale leaveth for a little to speak of Sir Galahad, and telleth of King Arthur and his knights. It must be known that in the crowded circle of the Table Round one seat stood always vacant. This was the Seat, or Siege, Perilous; none might sit therein without hurt, and crafty Merlin had foretold that none should sit therein till the blameless knight come, for whom was set apart the holiest adventure of all the many of the Table Round.

But it chanced one time as King Arthur and his knights sat at the board with wine and wassail and melody and mirth, the Siege Perilous standing all this while idle and empty, a wonder happened. The great doors flung wide of themselves, and the hall was full of white clear light. There came into the high hall an ancient man, clad all in white and closely cowled. Some say it was the very person of Joseph of Arimathea kept alive for centuries by the ministration of the Grail. By the hand led he a youthful knight in a robe of pure red, with golden head down-bent. Straight to the Siege Perilous led he him. Then was there

The Quest of the Holy Grail

dire dismay in the high hall. Harp and goblets were thrown down and crossed sword hilts lifted. Arthur the King rose in his golden seat, and Dagonet the jester crouched behind. But onward to the fatal seat moved the white hermit and the red-robed knight, while above with a cloud of angelic witnesses hovered the spirit of the Grail. Then over the Siege Perilous became visible the legend, *Cy Yert li Sieges Galaath*, "This is the seat of Galahad"; and Galahad sat therein.

"Then," says one, "all the knights of the Table Round marvelled them greatly of Sir Galahad, that he durst sit in that Siege Perilous and was so tender of age, and wist not whence he came but all only by God, and said, 'This is he by whom the Sanc-greal shall be achieved, for there sat never none but he, but he were mischieved.'"

And later Sir Galahad drew from out a stone a sword that none other might draw out and took it for his own. Then was he in need of a shield, and this, too, came as by miracle. For riding out one day from Camelot, he came to an abbey where he met a White Knight who gave to him a stout shield with a cross of red cendal upon it, and told him the ancient story of it. For this was none other than the shield Joseph of Arimathea forged for King Evelac of Sarras; and once when Evelac was hard beset by foes, and in



The Siege Perilous

danger of his death, on a sudden the faint figure of a bleeding man appeared upon the red cross, and thus by divine succor the King was saved. With the sword and shield thus wondrously gotten Galahad acquitted himself sturdily at tournaments and joustings. So he came into favour with Arthur the King and all his knights of the Table Round. Thus he lived at Camelot until that happened after which he might no longer abide, there or anywhere, two nights in one place.

IV

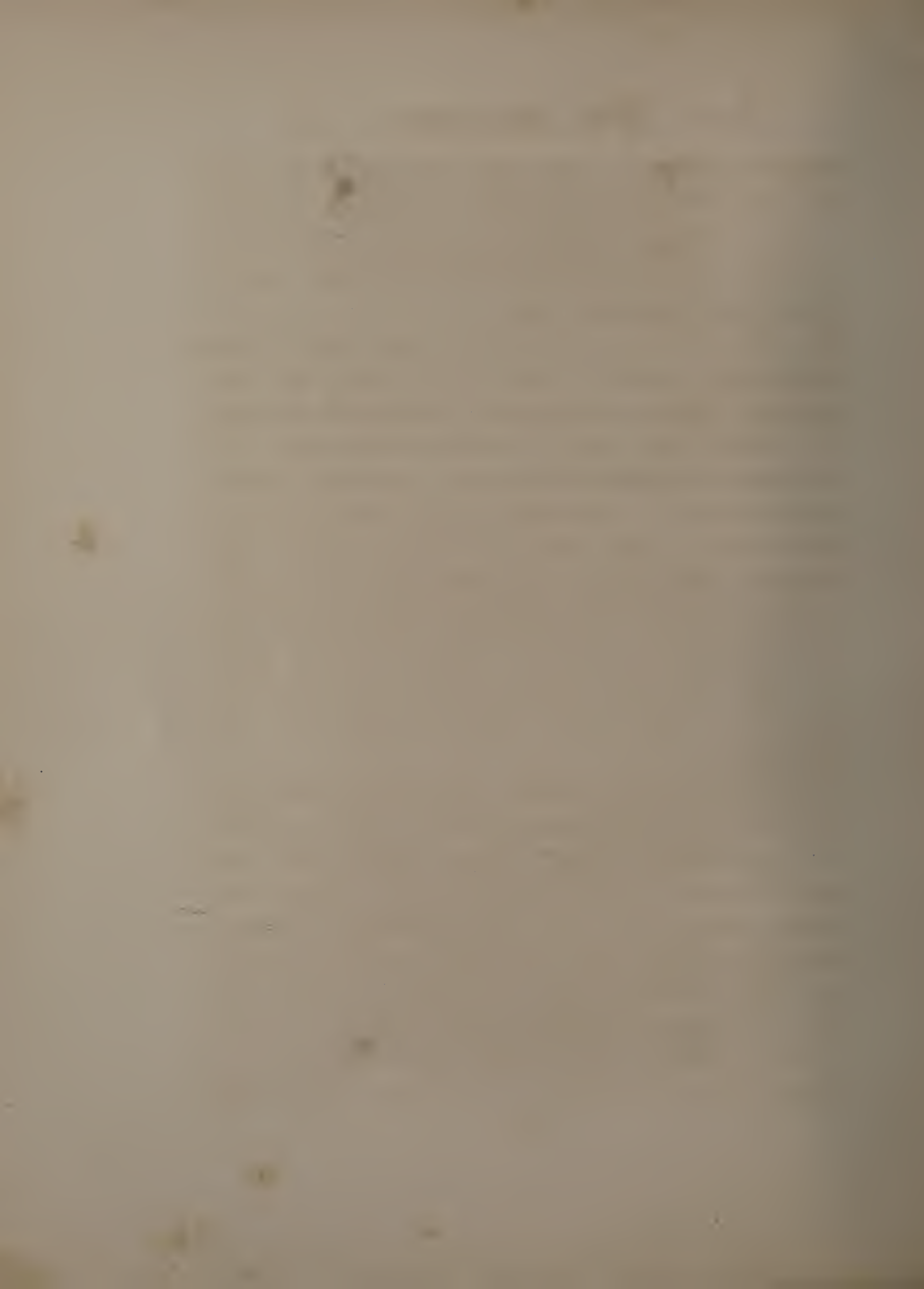
The Departure



ANOTHER time as Arthur and his knights, with Sir Galahad among them, sat at the Table Round there came a cracking and crying as of thunder, and a great blast entered the hall, and with the blast a sunbeam, seven times more bright than day, and in the air was all manner of sweetness and savor as all the spicery of the world had been there. "Then," saith the tale, "there entered into the hall the Holy Grail covered with white samite, but there was none might see it, nor who bore it. And then was all the hall filled with good odors, and every knight had such meats and drinks as he best loved in this world: and when the Holy Grail had been borne through the hall then the holy vessel departed suddenly, that they wist not where it became. Then had they all breath to speak."

So they gave thanks for the light and savor of the Grail had been there, but they were all aggrieved that they might not see the holy vessel itself for that it was so precious covered. Then swore they a vow to set out on the morrow, with no





The Departure

longer abiding, on the quest of the Grail; and they vowed to pursue it for a twelvemonth and a day, or longer if need be; and to return not to Camelot until the Grail was seen more openly than it was seen that day.

But when King Arthur heard this vow he was displeased. "Alas!" said he, "ye have nigh slain me with the avow and promise that ye have made. For ye have reft me of the fairest fellowship and the truest knighthood that ever was seen together in any realm of the world. For when ye depart from hence I am sure ye shall all never meet more in this world, for many shall die in the quest. And so it forethinketh me a little, for I have loved ye as my life, whence it shall grieve me right sore the departition of this fellowship. For I have had an old custom to have ye in my fellowship."

Nevertheless Arthur might not gainsay the quest, and all the knights made them ready to follow their wandering fires. Then many ladies and gentlewomen would fain go with knights that loved them, but this was forbidden. Having made all things ready they slept; and as became the highness of Galahad he slept in Arthur's own bed. So on the morrow, early, there was service in the minster. And there the knights of the quest, all save Galahad, in harness and helmet

The Quest of the Holy Grail

knelt with grounded lances to receive the final blessing of a holy bishop; and behind the lattice of the altar were the ladies of the court.

So when the service was done they mounted upon their horses and rode away through the streets of Camelot, and there was weeping of the rich and poor, and the King turned away and might not speak for weeping. And having tarried together one night at the castle of Vagon they parted on the morrow with mourning cheer and every knight took the way that liked him best. To some after danger and travail the veiled vision of the Grail was granted; but here the tale leaveth to speak of the many, and talketh only of Sir Galahad.

V

The Castle of the Grail



AFTER Galahad had fared out of Camelot, he met with many adventures in Lyonesse and the forest of Broceliande, but ere long the chances of his wandering brought him to the kingdom of Logres, which was, some say, in Spain, where upon Mount Salvat Amfortas the Fisher King held the mystic castle of the Grail. There Galahad found all the land laid waste and barren. In the olden time it had been rich and plentiful of cheer, and in the wells and springs of the land damsels had harbored who fed the wayfarer with meat, and pastries, and bread. But after that sin of Amfortas, whereby he was bereft of the sight of the Holy Grail these vanished, and the fruit and flowers withered, and the springs were dried, and there was no health in the land.

Now as Sir Galahad journeyed through this country wishing well that he were out of it, he came to a river, whereon in a boat were two men fishing. These he bespoke fairly, asking the path to shelter, and they courteously answered pointing the way to a castle hard by. And Sir Galahad rode

The Quest of the Holy Grail

long in the way they had shown, seeing no castle, when suddenly, as by enchantment, it appeared before him. Into this mysterious hold he penetrated. There men met him; and they took off his wearisome armor, and brought for him to put on a soft garment of red.

Then was Galahad led into a long hall where great fires were burning, and a numerous company sat drowsily. And there in the middle of the hall Galahad saw a high couch, whereon, gaunt and lonely lay an ancient, white-bearded king. Then as Sir Galahad stood by the head of the couch, there was a sudden sound, and a bright light, as all the torches of the world had been there. So there passed between the great fires and the king, a damsel bearing the Holy Grail veiled in samite, and the radiance of it put out the light of the fires as the sun obscures the stars. And behind her came a damsel bearing like Herodias a man's head on a golden charger; then came two knights holding aloft seven-branched candlesticks, and then one who bore a spear with blood dripping from its point, the veritable spear, saith the tale, wherewith Longus pierced the side of Christ.

Now was Sir Galahad at the very goal of the quest. Had he but asked the meaning of these things in reverent and pitiful question, so might

The Castle of the Grail



The Castle of the Grail

Amfortas and his court have been delivered from their trance-bound life, and so might Galahad have achieved the quest. But still there was a flaw in his blamelessness. Proud of his wit, confident as youth in worldly instruction, he was over much mindful of the lore of Gurnemanz, who chiefly had counselled him to think much, to speak little, and to be not over-ready with questions. So Sir Galahad was shamefastly silent, and the weary monarch and his wan court were left to their death in life, while the Grail, and the golden charger, and the seven-branched candlesticks, and the bleeding lance, and they that bore them vanished.

VI

The Loathly Damsel



WHEN the vision had faded, Sir Galahad was led to a chamber, and there he slept. But on the morrow's awakening, when he would confront his hosts, he knew the hall deserted, and no shouting along the corridors brought reply. Therefore did Galahad don his harness and mount his horse to ride out in search of the folk of the castle, and as he rode he found the drawbridge down to his occasions, but as he passed over it closed behind so forthrightly that had not the horse leaped quick it had gone hard with steed and rider.

Then must Sir Galahad needs alight and search in the forest. And there under an oak met he the Loathly Damsel, bald, and hideous as Hell, and fearsome as an ugly dream. Once she was the golden-tressed bearer of the Grail, but now she is under that same enchantment which is upon the Grail Castle, and against her will must she go to and fro tempting good knights to their doom. She it was that came under the oak tree in the forest riding upon a yellow mule, and she bore in her arms a dead king's head, with the golden



The Loathly Damsel

crown upon it; and after her came a second lady riding in the manner of an esquire; and afterward on foot came a third, dressed as a stripling, and she carried a scourge in her hand, wherewith she drove the riders onward.

Now when this Loathly Damsel saw Sir Galahad, she reviled and reproached him grievously, cursing him that by no pitiful question had he healed the dwellers in the Castle of the Grail from the plague that was upon their spirits. Then was Sir Galahad contrite and sorrowful, and as the damsels passed on, he cast himself down upon his knees, bitterly broken in spirit that so the great adventure had gone from him. Then when he had wrestled with his spirit he took horse and rode through and out of that land; and everywhere he found cruel war raging, and everywhere he was followed by the curses of peasant folk for the woe and ravage he had brought upon them. Some say that as he went there came faintly to his ears a dolorous sound as of voices singing:

Ardentes anime,
Flent sine fine :
Ambulant per Tenebras
Dicuntque singule ;
Ve ! Ve ! Ve ! quante
Sunt tenebre !

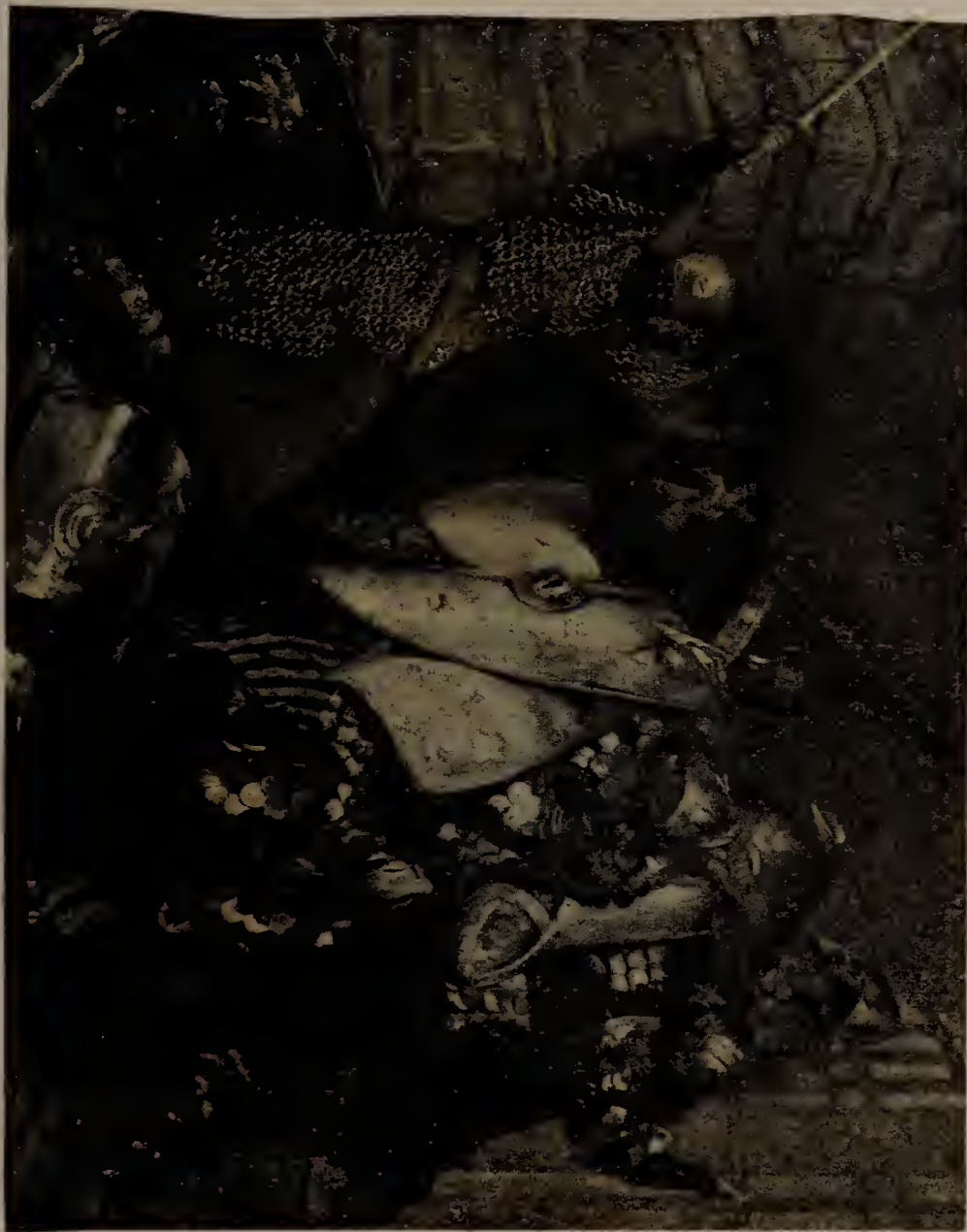
VII

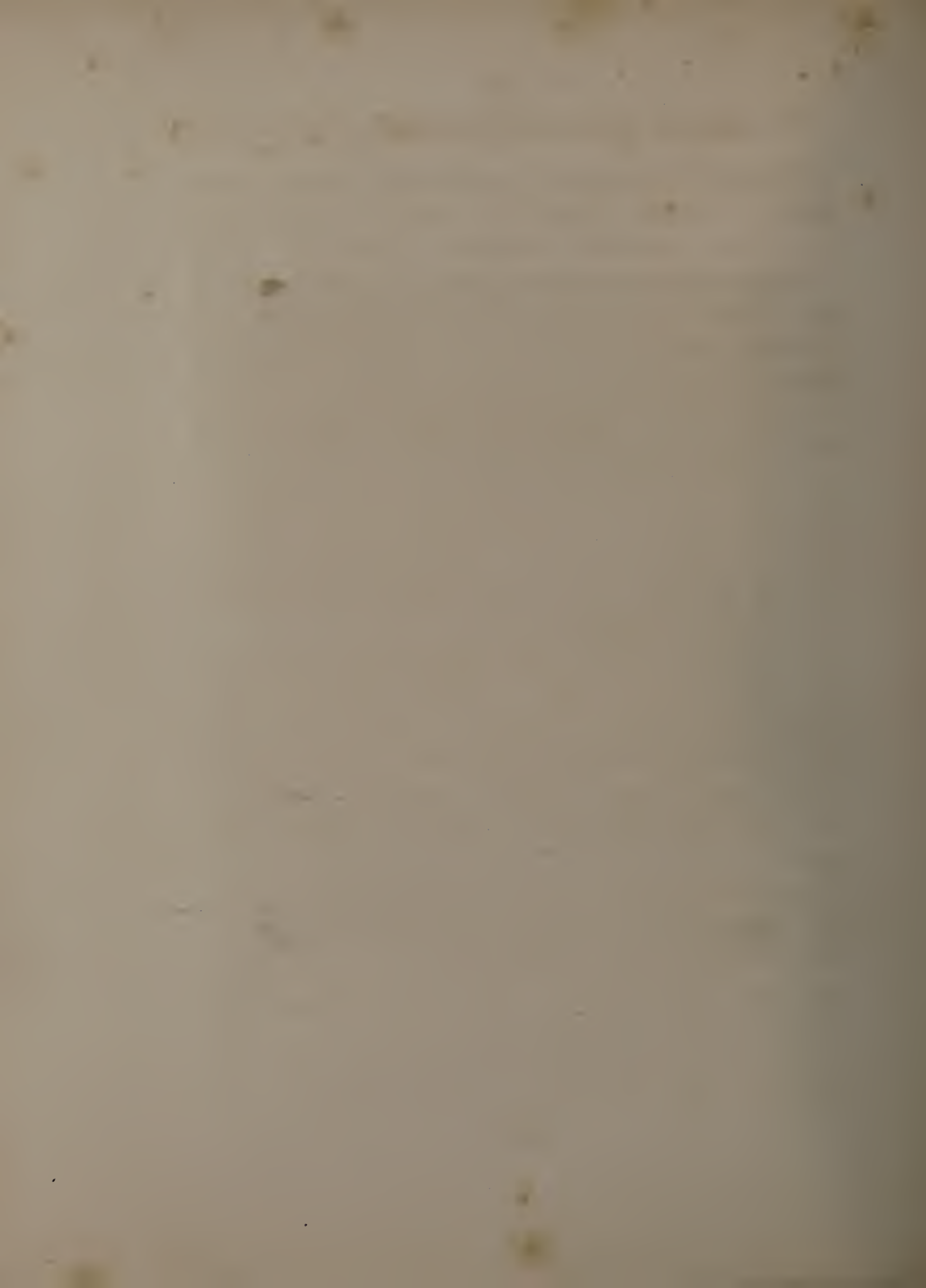
The Castle of the Maidens: The Fight



AFTER this, saith the tale, Galahad rode many journeys forward and backward as adventure would lead him. At last he came unto a mountain where was an old chapel empty and desolate; there he knelt before the altar and besought God for wholesome counsel. So, as he prayed, he heard a voice that said, "Go now, thou adventurous knight, to the Castle of the Maidens, and there do thou away the wicked customs." When Sir Galahad heard this he thanked God and took his horse; and he had ridden but a little space when he saw in a valley beside a fair river, a tall castle girt round by deep ditches. There he met a man of great age, and either saluted the other, and Galahad asked him the castle's name. "Fair sir," said he, "it is the Castle of the Maidens." "That is a cursed castle," said Galahad, "and all that be conversant therein." "Therefore I counsel you, Sir knight," said the stranger, "to turn again." "Sir," said Galahad, "wit you well I shall not turn again."

Then looked Sir Galahad on his arms that





The Castle of the Maidens: The Fight

nothing failed him, and put his shield before him, and set his face toward the castle. Anon there met him seven fair maidens, who said, "Sir knight, ye ride here in a great folly, for ye have the water to pass over." "Why should I not pass the water?" said Galahad. So rode he away from them, and met with a squire that said, "Knight, those knights in the castle defy you, and forbid you, ye go no further till they know what ye would." "Fair sir," said Galahad, "I come to destroy the wicked custom of this castle." "Sir," said the squire, "an ye abide by that ye have enough to do." "Go you now," said Galahad, "and haste my needs."

So the squire entered the castle and anon came out seven fierce knights, clad in loathsome scaly armor, and all were brethren. Then when they saw Sir Galahad they raged and rushed incontinent upon him. "Why," said he, "will ye all have ado with me at once?" "Yea," said they.

Then Galahad put forth his sword, and smote the foremost to the earth, and therewith all the others smote him on his shield great strokes, so that their spears broke. Then Sir Galahad drew his sword and set upon them so hard that it was a marvel to see it, and so through great force he overcame them all, and put them to flight.

The Quest of the Holy Grail

Now by the seven fierce knights in scaly armor one must understand the seven deadly sins, and by the imprisoned maidens the virtues oppressed and kept down by these sins. For though Galahad had walked cleanly putting aside the lures of sense and bribes of passion, yet was it needful that he should conquer deadly sin once and for all ; but more of this will appear.



VIII

The Castle of the Maidens: The Key



O the combat between Galahad and the seven brethren had lasted till it was mid-day, and all the while they had wondered mightily that there was in earthly man half as much of strength, and when they were weary and wounded and forespent they had turned about and fled. And Galahad did not follow one of them; but when he saw them in flight, he turned and went toward the gate of the castle. And when he had passed the outer wall, he found abiding his coming in an embrasure of the wall, the ancient man in a white robe, and cowled. So when Sir Galahad beheld this reverend man he unhelmed and knelt before him for his priestly benison. But he reached out a pale hand mutely, and therewith committed unto Sir Galahad the key of the inner gate of the castle. Then Galahad arose with thanksgiving and fared inward.

IX

The Castle of the Maidens



WHEN Sir Galahad opened the gates and passed into the castle; and there in a vaulted hall with thick-barred casements, he came upon a company of maidens, more than he could number. And each one said, "Lord God's welcome to thee, for we have been long expecting thee to deliver us, and blessed be God that hath sent thee here, and here we should ever be, but for thy coming to deliver us from this dolorous castle." Then reached they all their hands to him with shy yet eager joy; and Galahad laying off his dented shield and helmet, with knightly respect and observance went kissing the white fingers from one to another.

And when Galahad would depart, then one of the maidens said: "Lord, if thou goest hence in that way, those whom thou drovest hence a little while ago in thy power, will come here again with strength, and will maintain the evil custom which they had here before and so thou wilt lose thy labor so far." "What will ye that I shall do?" said Galahad. "Sir," said they, "send after all the knights that hold their lands of this



The Castle of the Maidens

castle, and make them swear to use the customs that were here before, of old time.”

And thereupon came from one of the chambers a fair young maiden and in her hand she bore a horn of ivory bound with gold richly, and she said: “Sir, make this horn to sound and it will be heard for ten miles round about.” Then Galahad blew the horn, and when he had blown he laid off his armor, and sat him down on the side of a bed to rest. And there a priest came unto him, and Sir Galahad asked him why the castle was called the Castle of the Maidens. “Sir,” said the priest, “it is seven years since I came here to the Duke that owned this castle and the domain of the seven knights that fled from thee to-day. And the night I came there arose a quarrel between the Duke and the seven knights because of the Duke’s daughter who was beloved by one of the seven knights. And the end was that they slew the Duke and his eldest son, and then they took the maiden and the treasure of the castle and then by great force they held all the knights of the castle against their will under their obeisance, and they robbed and ravaged the poor common people of all that they had. And this caused sorrow to the Duke’s daughter, and she said to them as of prophecy: ‘Lords, as ye have gained this castle because of a

The Quest of the Holy Grail

maiden, ye shall also lose it because of a maiden and ye shall be conquered by the body of one man.' And when they heard that, they swore that not one maiden should go that road whom they would not put in prison, until the one knight came who would conquer the whole seven of them. And that they did, from that time until now, and for that cause this castle is called the Castle of the Maidens."

By this were the knights of the country come and Galahad bade that they should do homage to the Duke's daughter, and swear that in their lifetime they would never suffer the wicked custom to come among them. And he commanded all the maidens that were there to go to their own countries in safety. So having slept for a night he departed on the morrow, leaving all those there in joy and peace.

X

Blanchefleur

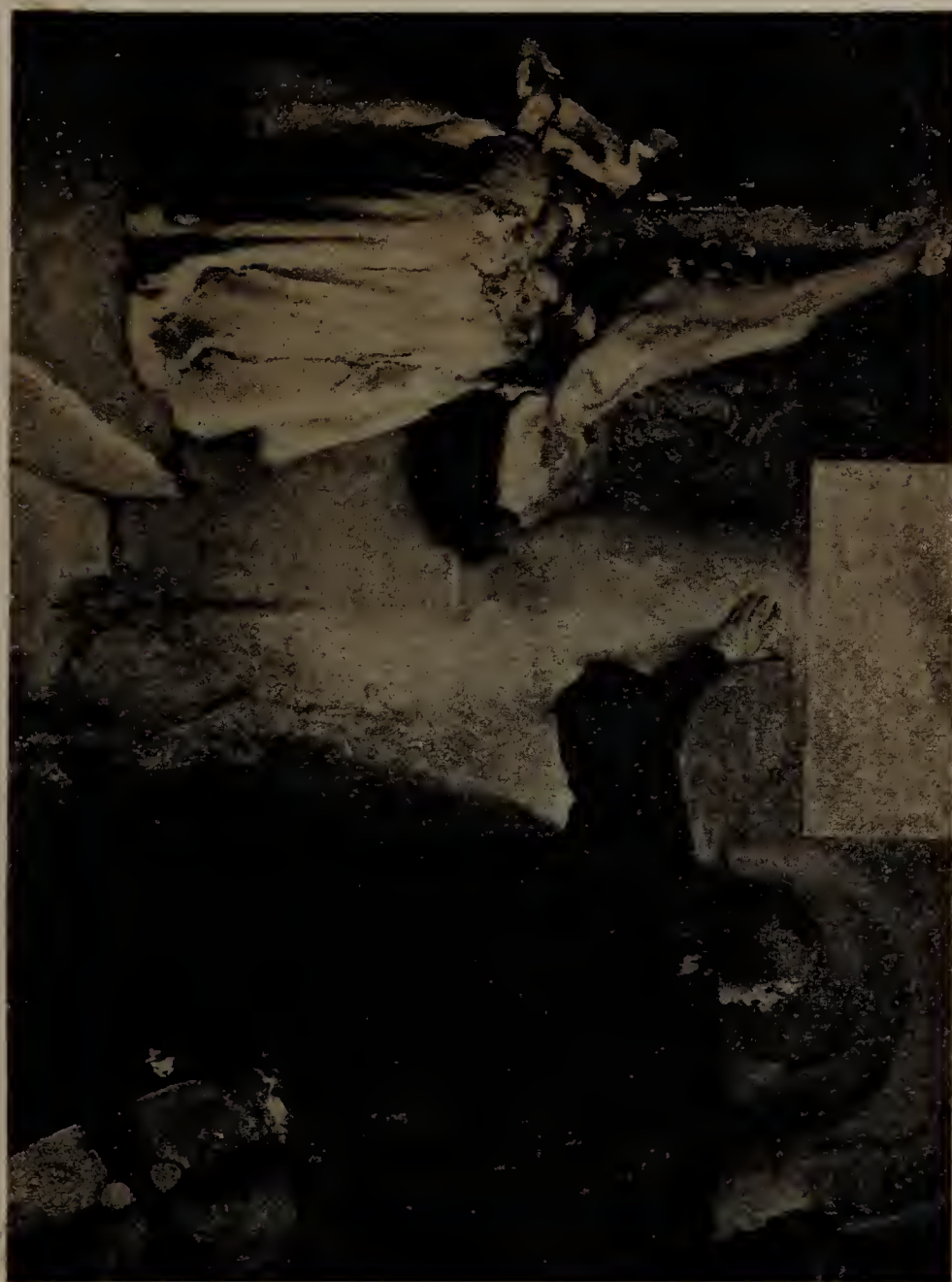


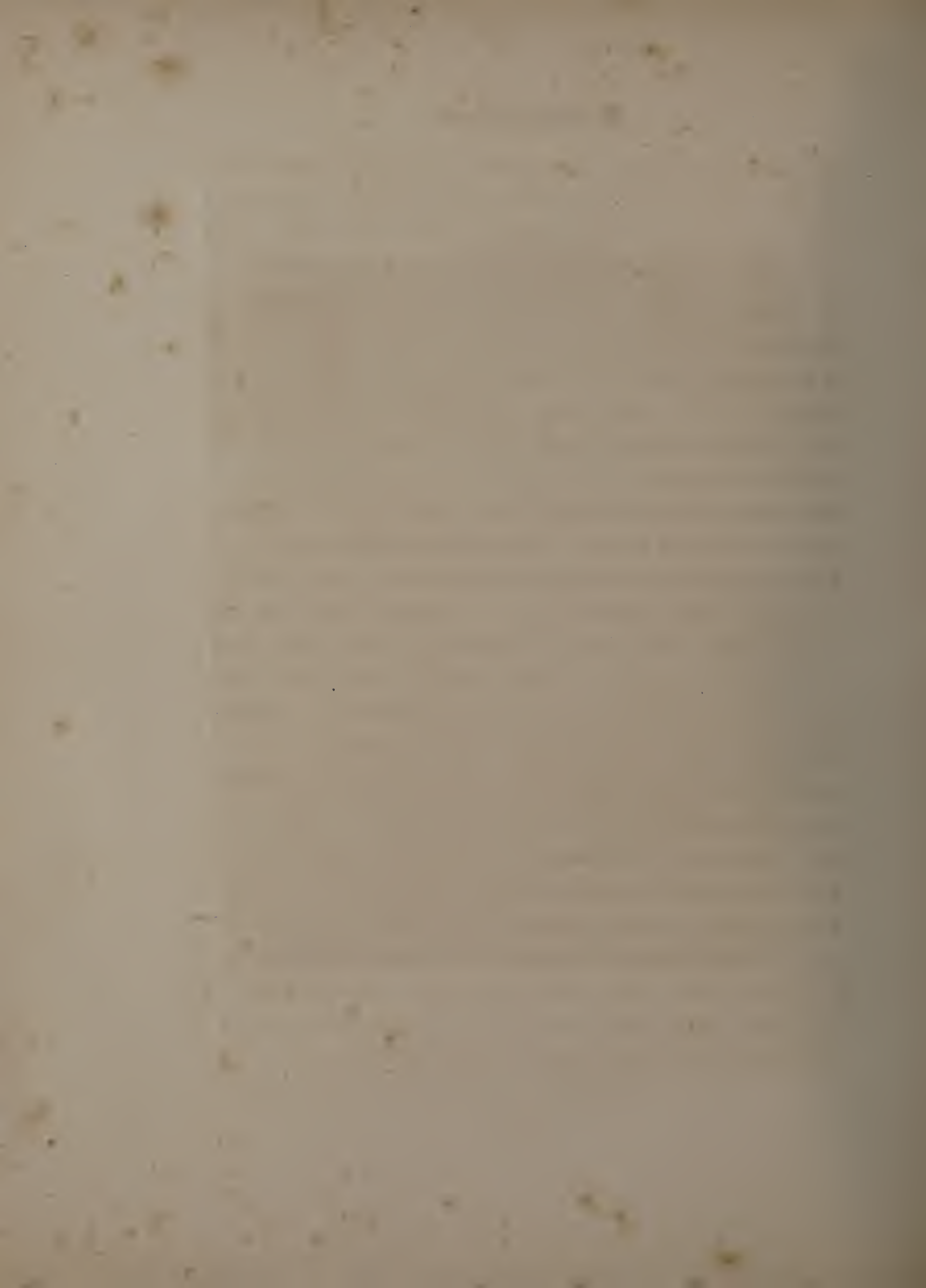
OW as Sir Galahad, beautiful and young, had ridden up and down in quest of the Holy Grail, many damsels and ladies had loved him and some had tempted him. But by one only had his heart been stirred. This, one must know, had been at the first, when he was but young in the quest, and youthful blood was quick within him. For when he had left the care of Gurnemanz and ridden a little way into the world, he came at the end of a day's journey to a town defended by a castle, and when he had entered therein he found all, even the very convents, waste and deserted. Then came there to him the lady of the castle, and when Galahad saw her he was filled with something half like wonder, for she was young and slim, but colored as of ivory and gold, and fair as a white flower on a sunny morning. And she told Sir Galahad that her name was Blanchefleur, which signifies "white flower," and that she was niece to Gurnemanz, his tutor in the lore of this world. And she courteously bade him sit by her side at table. Then when night was come Galahad was led

The Quest of the Holy Grail

to a chamber, and there he laid him to rest. But the damsel could not sleep for bitter care. So came she presently weeping to Galahad's bedside and besought his succor; for she told him that the evil King Clamadex beset the castle, and that on the morrow, unless Galahad aid her, she might no longer withstand him,—but rather than yield herself to the will of Clamadex she would slay herself. Then Sir Galahad readily promised his succor; and she in great joy and pure love laid herself by his side. So slept they mouth to mouth; and on the morrow she arose maid, as maid she had laid her to bed. Then Galahad went forth and conquered King Clamadex and sent him in thrall to Arthur. And often, thereafter, as he pushed unswervingly on his high quest, his heart yearned back to the sweet beauty of Blanche fleur.

Now long after this, and after the famous adventure of the Castle of the Maidens, Sir Galahad journeying in a wood met four knights bearing their father wounded to his death. When Galahad came near he saw that the wounded knight was Gurnemanz. Then Gurnemanz, when he saw that it was Galahad, spoke faintly and told him all his evil case, and who had done it. So Galahad swore to avenge him. Then Gurnemanz instructed Galahad as of old. He told him





Blanchefleur

that he had failed to achieve the great adventure of the Grail because he had quitted Blanchefleur who loved him better than her life; and Gurnemanz bade Galahad go marry Blanchefleur, his niece. Then Galahad as of old hearkened to the words of his tutor; and all his heart leaned in longing toward the damsel; so to light Gurnemanz on his dark way, he swore he would go marry Blanchefleur, and love her always, and live holily with her.

Wherefore when he had slain the foes of Gurnemanz Galahad fared to the castle of Blanchefleur. And there she received him joyfully, and all her longing and her will was toward him and his toward her. So for a little space they were emparadised together. But on the morn that they were wedded the vision of the Grail came to Galahad, and new knowledge. So he knew that it must be a virgin knight who should heal sin-stricken Amfortas, and achieve the holy quest. Then after sore travail of soul made he the great renunciation. Blanchefleur he left sitting forlorn, her bridal-blood gone to sad pallor, her bride-roses in her lap. But as Sir Galahad, now forever the maiden-knight, went out with wan face to follow the gleam of the Grail to the last adventure in his hand was a white rose of Blanchefleur's.

XI

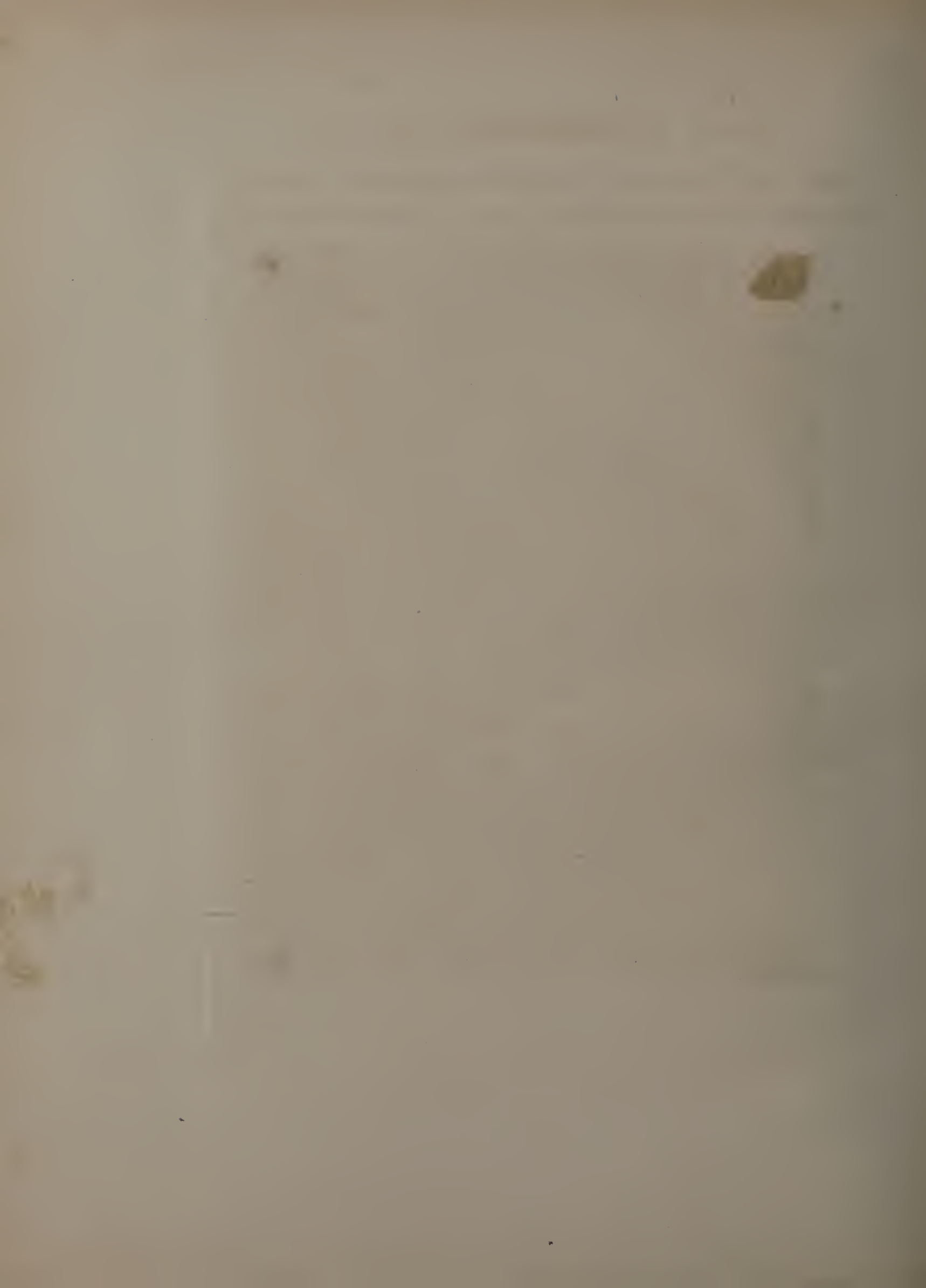
Amfortas



OW the end of the long quest was drawing nigh. For when Sir Galahad had gone out of the Castle of Blanchefleur, he set his steed toward Logres and the Castle of the Grail. And while he journeyed thither, two of Arthur's knights rode with him, to wit, Sir Percival and Sir Bors. They had gone far in the quest, and achieved many adventures, and done away with evil customs in divers places, but insomuch as there was taint of sin in their life they might never behold the Holy Grail.

After much riding, the three came again to that waste and barren land which once had been so plentiful, where damsels had harbored in the springs and wells. And when they had passed through it, and were come to the castle upon the hill where lay Amfortas in his age-long sleep, and had entered therein, there came at vesper time a hot wind; and in the wind was a voice saying: "Let all unfit depart. For a true knight shall be fed with heaven's food." Then Sir Percival and Sir Bors rode sorrowfully away, and Sir Galahad passed to the long hall of Amfortas.





Amfortas

There he found all as before, the enchantment-fettered king and the hollow-eyed company lit by the great fires. And presently there came as of old the sudden sound and the soft bright light, and then between the great fires and the king passed the procession of the Holy Grail, bearing the veiled vessel, and the golden salver, and the seven-branched candlestick, and the bleeding lance. Now when Galahad, grown wise and kindly through knowledge and his own sorrow, looked upon these and upon the weary trouble of the old king, he was filled with compassionate ruth. Then looking upon the king he said pitifully: "What ails thee, O King? And what mean these wondrous things?"

Now this was the fated question whereby Amfortas should be healed. And thereat he and all his court were loosed from the thralldom that was upon them, and their eyes were clear, so much that they might behold the veiled vision of the Holy Grail. Then Amfortas knew Sir Galahad for his own nephew, the last of the line of Arima-thean Joseph; and gladly he told him the meaning of the wonders he had seen. Yet this lasted but a little while. For when they had all been fulfilled with bodily and spiritual sustenance from the Grail, there came from heaven an angel of light that bore away the Grail from Amfortas'

The Quest of the Holy Grail

keeping, And Death took the old King from
Galahad's embrace, and no man saw him more in
this world.



XII

Galahad the Deliverer



NON after the translation of Amfortas, healed of his hurt, there came to Sir Galahad a mystic voice saying, "Go thou to the sea and enter into Solomon's ship which shall bear thee to Sarras." Then Galahad hearkened to the voice, and mounting his great white steed, rode forth toward the sea. And as he rode all the peasant-folk of that country that once had cursed him for the woe and ravage of war he had brought upon them, now came thronging to him with blessing and benediction. And many, both men and women, fell upon their knees and worshipped him as he passed, that all by him peace and plenty were come again in that land, and many hailed him "Galahad the Deliverer."

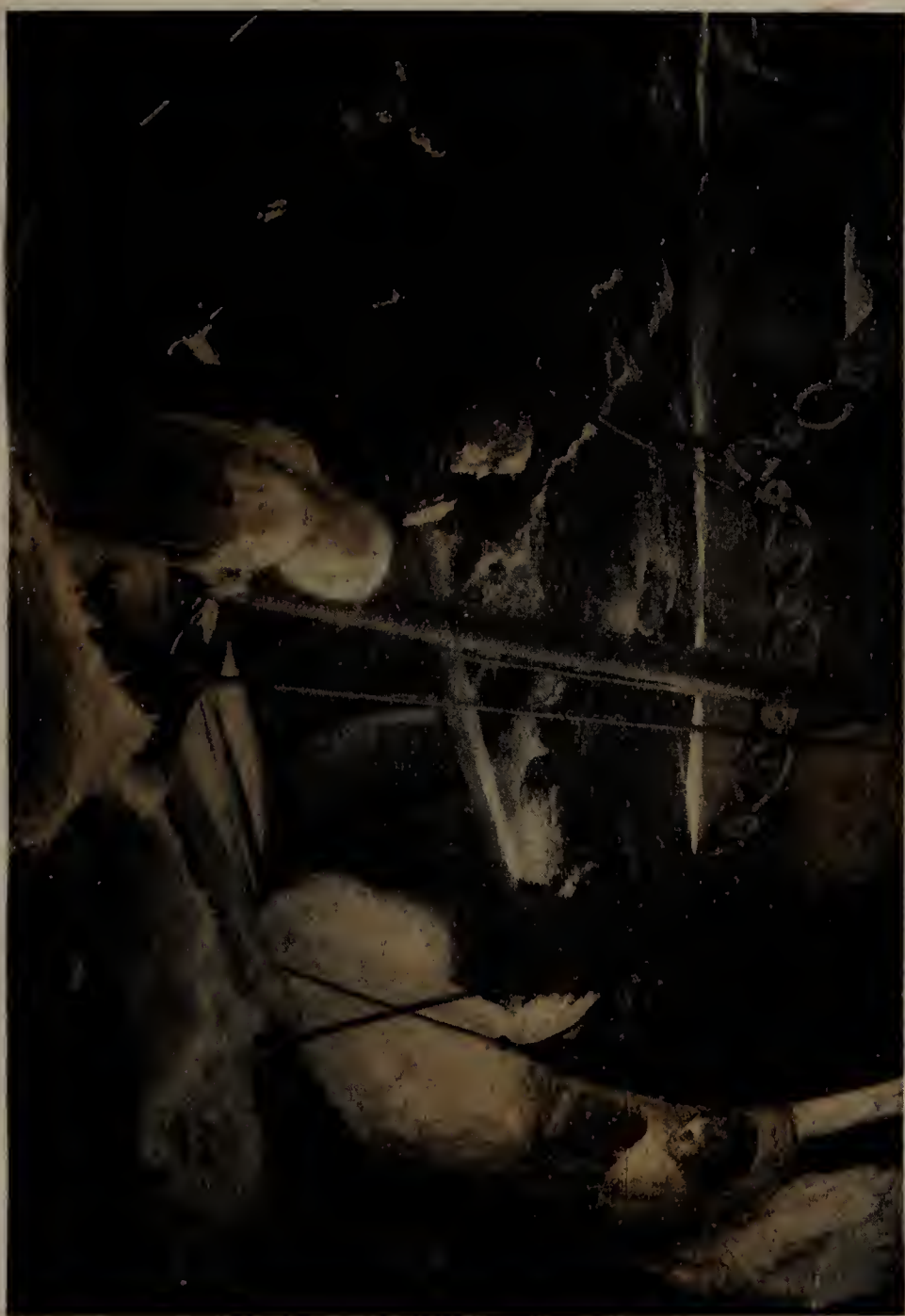
And as Sir Galahad rode onward he met again Sir Percival and Sir Bors riding in the way; and they turned about and went with him. So they all three came down to the shore of the sea together.

XIII

Solomon's Ship



WHEN Sir Galahad and Sir Percival and Sir Bors, riding together swiftly, came down to the restless sea, there drawn up to the shingle they found a marvellous ship. It was built of beautiful and rich woods, curiously inlaid; and there was upon it a red sail with a great white cross enwoven, and the symbol of the scroll at the border. And one that met them there told them that this was Solomon's Ship and the tale thereof. But first he showed them in the stern of this ship three spindles, one white, one green, one red. Now these spindles we must know, were of the tree in the garden whereof Eve ate the fatal fruit. For when our first parents were driven forth from Eden, Eve carried still the branch of the tree in her hand. And later she planted it, and it grew into a comely tree, white as snow in token that she who brought it out of the Garden had walked chastely therein. But when Abel was begotten, the leaves of the tree turned green, and when Cain slew Abel his brother all the tree was red like blood. Yet the tree grew and waxed marvellously fair; and it was the fairest and most





Solomon's Ship

delectable tree that any man might behold. So it throve until the time of Solomon, who knew all the virtues of trees, as he knew the course of the stars and many other diverse things.

Now this wise King Solomon, saith the tale, had, among many, an evil wife with the gift of tongues, so that he despised all women in his books.

Then came a voice to Solomon saying: "If heaviness come to a man by a woman reck thou never, for of thy lineage shall be born a woman by whom shall come to the world joy a hundred times more than this heaviness giveth sorrow."

Then Solomon knew it was the holy Virgin of whom the Saviour of the world should be born. But he asked if this should be an end of his lineage. "Nay," said the voice, "there shall come a man which shall be a maid, and the last of your blood, and he shall be as good a knight as Duke Joshua, thy brother-in-law."

Then Solomon sent for all the carpenters of the land and let make a ship of wood the fairest and most durable that men may find, and three spindles made from the wood of the tree of the Garden he bade place therein. And when the ship was finished and Solomon would have entered into it, a wind arose and the ship was shoven into the sea, and ran so fast that he lost sight of it in a little while. And he heard a small voice saying:

The Quest of the Holy Grail

“Solomon, the last knight of thy lineage shall rest in this ship.”

So when Sir Galahad heard all this tale he knew well that the ship was for him, and entered into it. And Sir Percival and Sir Bors went with him, for though they might never see the Grail, yet as they had not faltered in the quest, so might they go to behold Sir Galahad's achievement. Then arose a great wind and drove them from the land. And Sir Percival and Sir Bors hung their shields to the wale to keep the ship to a course, and the great red sail hauled her swiftly, cleaving the brown sea. Yet as Sir Galahad sped in his strange ship o'er a perilous sea, there was ever before his eyes a white-winged angel in the prow, bearing the Grail in its veil of samite. And ever, far ahead at the sky's verge, was a line of mystical light like the day-rim of a new dawn.

XIV

Sarras



HEREWITHAL the tale is still of Sir Galahad and Sir Percival and Sir Bors, that the ship beareth away right swiftly, and they knew not whither it took them. And each night ere he slept Sir Galahad prayed to God to put an end to the life of his fleshly body. And at this Sir Percival and Sir Bors wondered, but a voice came out of the wind answering: "Be under no care, Galahad, thy prayer shall be granted thee."

So the ship ran on by night and day as it pleased God, until the three awoke at a sunrise to see before them a castle and an island of the sea, with many spires and turrets. And as they came near to the shore they saw men in white garments, and heard sweet bells they were sounding in tune. Then the ship took haven by a gate in the high sea-wall, and the sea withdrew itself back, so that the ship was left on dry land. And when the shingle was dry, then the three went up through the gate toward the castle. And as they went they saw goodly halls and mansions with tall trees and bright fountains, all the fairest that any

The Quest of the Holy Grail

man might see. Anon they saw by the side of the way two men, young in visage, but with hair and beards white as snow. These when they saw Sir Galahad dressed themselves to meet him; and running to him they bowed down and worshipped the shield that he bore at his back, and kissed the red cross upon it. But when Sir Galahad wondered and would have had them rise, "Sir," said they, "marvel not of this that we do, for well know we the knight that bore this shield before." Then they told him that this was none other than the island kingdom of Sarras, of which Evelac was aforetime king.

So were Sir Galahad and his fellow knights held in great honor at Sarras. And Galahad by virtue of the power of purity that was in him, healed many sick and cripples. For this they were cast into prison as evil enchanter. But soon the king of the country fell sick, and had them out of prison, and sought their pardon for the unjust blame; and a little while after he died. So all the people of Sarras chose Sir Galahad to be their king and treat justly with them.



XV

The Holy Grail



URING GALAHAD of Sarras ruled righteously for a year and a day. And upon a hill near his palace he made a sacred place. There was he building a Golden Tree. Each morning and evening he repaired thither to make a prayer to God; and daily he added gold and gems to his tree. So at the year's end the Golden Tree was perfect.

On the morrow went Galahad to it to worship. Then of a sudden there was in that Sacred Place the holy swoon of the Grail; and Sir Galahad, now at the haven of his hope, began to tremble very greatly. Then there came a company of angels, and with them in a white robe Joseph of Arimathea, and high aloft, with a crown of thorns about it, bore he the naked Grail. Then to his knees went Galahad, and crown and sceptre fell from him, and his face upturned in adoration became as the face of a child.

Now was the soul of Galahad too great in knowledge and power and joy to abide crippled in his earthly body. So he sent for Percival and Bors and kissed them, and thereafter was he never more

The Quest of the Holy Grail

seen on this earth. And a hand came down from Heaven and took the Grail. And since has there never been a man so hardy as to say that he has seen the Holy Grail.

Thus endeth this story of the
Sancgreal the whiche is
Chronycle for one of the truest
And holpest that is
In this World.



PRESS OF
GEO. H. ELLIS CO.
BOSTON
MASSACHUSETTS



